8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RH1 Caucasia RH1

§ 5. History

Just as we have omitted the Cimmerian problem and the many interesting facts regarding the Scythians when speaking of the archaeology of the Caucasus, so too in our historical survey we must omit many an important fact and problem. We wish here merely to present a short sketch, as a preliminary orientation. We shall have occasion to speak of certain periods more in detail later on.

The NORTHWESTERNERS. According to legend, the Cherkess were at one time a powerful pastoral people, occupying an extensive area north of the Caucasus. Although it is impossible to say just when the Cherkess immigrated and from where, we do know that they must have made the Caucasus their home long before the ancient writers were aware of their existence. The Latin and Greek writers speak of them as the Zygoi, Zinkhoi, Syndi, Kerketaioi, and Kerketai. It seems that from very early times enemies had been driving the Cherkess towards the mountains. In the fourteenth century of our era, the coastal tribes were forced farther south, till they finally occupied a sector between various Turco-Tartaric peoples, the Nogai, Kumyks, Karachai, and Taulu. The land they occupied was called Kabarda and they are known today as the Kabardians. In 1777 the Russians drove the remaining Cherkess beyond the Kuban, Malka, and Terek, and finally completely conquered them. Rather than submit to the Russian czar, a large number of Northwesterners (400,000 strong, Cherkess, Abkhaz, and all the Ubykhs) preferred to leave their homeland and migrate to Asia Minor, Syria, and the Balkans.

The Abkhaz were known to Pliny and Arrian as the Apsils and to the Georgian Chronicler as Ap'shili and Ap'sari. In the first centuries after Christ the Abkhaz were subjects of the Georgian kings; then of the Laz; then in the eighth century of their own independent kings; in the tenth century they again became subjects of Georgian kings, through marriage of the respective royal families. They were finally subjected to the Russians in 1863.

The Northwesterners were Christianized, according to Vakhtang's Chronicle, about A. D. 40. This report of course is not reliable. It is a fact, however, that they became Christians after the Byzantine occupation of the coastal cities. Emperor Justinian is supposed to have built a large church at Pitzunda, which became the seat of the Abkhazian *katholicos* ("patriarch" or "archbishop"). In the last decades of the seventeenth century all the Abkhazian tribes (with the exception of the Samursakhanians) became Mohammedans. The Cherkess were also Christians, before their conversion to Islamism in the eighteenth century.

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. The origin of the Chechens and their early history is unknown. They too were Christianized quite early, perhaps in the fourth century. They accepted the Koran in the seventeenth and eighteenth century; the Ingushi, however, were not completely converted to Mohammedanism till 1862. The Chechens, we also know, have been constantly menaced by the Turco-Mongols since the time of Chingis-Khan. Later they even invited foreign princes to rule over them and defend them against the Kumyks and Kabardian raiders. Last century they fought valiantly against the Russians in the Murid wars under the leadership of Gazi-Molliah and Shamyl.